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Vermeulen, F.; Laméris, J.; Minkoff, D.

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Welcome to the neighbourhood: The spatial dimensions of legitimacy for voluntary leisure organisations

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Floris Vermeulen

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Joran Laméris

Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands

Debra Minkoff

Columbia University, USA

Abstract

With an understanding that organisations in a city are spatially located and that the geographical distribution of their resources is uneven, this paper examines how neighbourhood characteristics affect the spatial dimension of one basic resource in particular: organisational legitimacy. Specifically, we investigate how the presence of immigrants, the presence of youth and the degree of residential mobility in a neighbourhood may influence collective frames among its residents on what constitutes appropriate and suitable organisational forms. Employing multilevel analysis on data about the voluntary leisure organisations of immigrants in Amsterdam during three periods of time, we consider whether these neighbourhood characteristics do indeed have an impact on the number of organisations to be found and on their vitality. We conclude that an immigrant presence reduces the spatial dimension of organisational legitimacy, which consequently decreases organisational density and survival rates; a youth presence has the opposite effect; and the degree of residential mobility has no significant effect.

Keywords

Amsterdam, immigrants, leisure organisations, neighbourhood, organisational legitimacy, youth

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Introduction

Because organisations are spatially located and the geographical distribution of their resources is uneven, we can expect that *where* an organisation physically resides impacts its

Corresponding author:

Floris Vermeulen, Political Science, University of Amsterdam, PO Box 15578, Amsterdam 1001 NB, Netherlands.

Email: f.f.vermeulen@uva.nl

ability to operate over time. Location harbours both constraints and opportunities for organisations to access resources, power and social structures. Marquis and Battilana (2009) argue that the relevant geographic scope for an organisational type is an empirical question – one that it is determined bottom-up through the everyday individual experiences of people and their organisations. Geographic entities, such as cities, regions or countries, may qualify as relevant spaces in which to measure organisational vitality. But smaller entities, such as city districts or neighbourhoods, can be equally important (McQuarrie and Marwell, 2009; Vermeulen, et al., 2014).

This paper's focus is the relevance of neighbourhoods for, in particular, voluntary leisure organisations, such as sports clubs and hobby groups. Going back to the Chicago School tradition that considered the neighbourhood as the fundamental unit of social organisation in the modern city, we have good reasons to assume a strong relationship between the two entities. As those early sociologists observed, urban life became organised and developed in distinct neighbourhoods, with important roles played by formal voluntary organisations, such as religious institutions, community newspapers, ethnic clubs and local schools. These organisations provided concrete social settings within which neighbourhood inhabitants could interact and produce community norms of behaviour (McQuarrie and Marwell, 2009: 250–253). The presence – or absence – of voluntary community-based organisations is regarded by many urban scholars as an indicator of strong – or weak – levels of social interaction between neighbourhood dwellers. The strength of underlying social networks and the degree of dwellers' individual civic participation seem to explain the presence and continued existence of community-based organisations (Sampson, 2012; Vermeulen

et al., 2012). However, we know much less about how neighbourhoods as geographical units impact the vitality rates of organisations located within them. It could very well be that, in some cases, neighbourhoods are not relevant geographical units for local organisations. Recent urban research has, for instance, shown that urban social organisation is more and more driven by social, economic and political dynamics extending far beyond the neighbourhood (McQuarrie and Marwell, 2009; Marwell, 2007). McRoberts (2005) shows the lack of neighbourhood effects on local organisations in his study of black, mostly immigrant, churches in an economically marginalised neighbourhood in Boston. The many churches there were not social spaces where neighbourhood cohesion was fostered; rather, all members came from outside the neighbourhood and together formed a religious community apart from the neighbourhood in which they gathered. Vermeulen et al. (2014) also found no neighbourhood effects on community-based organisations in Amsterdam. They did, though, hypothesise that the existence of non-profit organisations with activities geared to nearby residents, such as recreational, cultural and leisure associations, could imply a tighter link between neighbourhood and organisational vitality.

In this paper we take as a starting point the understanding that, within a particular city, neighbourhoods differ significantly in terms of available resources for voluntary leisure organisations, and that this determines how they function. We argue that this is partly due to different levels of organisational legitimacy for such organisations across neighbourhoods. Legitimacy – the general acceptance that an organisation's actions are desirable, suitable and appropriate (Suchman, 1995) – is determined in part by the neighbourhood residents. Their perception of the neighbourhood, the organisations that operate within it and individuals'

willingness to participate in organisational activities together produce the level of spatial legitimacy for such organisations in that particular neighbourhood. Furthermore, following the literature on participation in voluntary organisations, we argue that the neighbourhood's demographic profile significantly influences levels of spatial legitimacy. For example, formal voluntary leisure organisations are likely to be perceived as less appropriate within immigrant communities and neighbourhoods that experience high residential mobility, while those same organisations may be perceived as more appropriate among residents with young children.

This paper looks at how the presence of immigrants, youth and levels of residential mobility affect the vitality of local voluntary organisations. Our research builds on earlier studies concerning the survival of local non-profit and community-based organisations, which have primarily addressed the influence of specific organisational characteristics (Singh et al., 1986; Walker and McCarthy, 2010). With an interest in understanding the broader implications for organisational populations (see e.g. Baum and Oliver, 1991; Minkoff, 2002; Vermeulen, 2013), we also draw on a related stream of research emphasising the embeddedness of nonprofits and voluntary associations in macro-institutional and ecological contexts that shape their viability over time. In line with a more recent set of developments in organisational sociology, we focus here on 'organizations' simultaneous embeddedness in both geographical communities and organizational fields' (Marquis and Battilana, 2009: 285; Vermeulen et al., 2014) as a way to comprehend how local context – in this case, neighbourhoods – might matter. To this end, we conceptualise the local non-profits in our study as specifically neighbourhood-based leisure organisations (Milofsky, 1987).

The spatial dimensions of organisational legitimacy

As is the case for all organisations, neighbourhood organisations are vulnerable to the uncertainties of their environment and must struggle with the different demands made on them (see e.g. Aldrich, 1999). The tension caused by such unpredictability is carried over into the forms and structures of organisations in a process that results in a loosely coupled set of organisational elements designed to resolve competing environmental demands. Some organisations are more successful than others in adapting to environmental contingencies. Others are selected out of the organisational population by competition (Hannan and Freeman, 1989). Minkoff (1993) posits that those properties promoting an organisation's legitimacy are what determine non-profits' survival advantages, namely by facilitating their acquisition of resources.

A basic component in the development of any organisational population is legitimacy (Stinchcombe, 1965). Organisations seek legitimacy by incorporating structures and procedures that match widely accepted models in society (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Legitimacy is further gained when relevant stakeholders, which comprise both internal and external audiences, endorse and support the aims and activities of an organisation. Processes of legitimation are, among other things, strongly related to the age of the organisation (Aldrich, 1999). Recent scholarship suggests that organisational legitimacy is not formed in a vacuum, as organisational populations are aggregate collective actors with spatial extensions and dimensions (Lomi, 2000). An organisation's spatial dimension therefore needs to be considered with constituencies embedded in local geographical communities (Marquis and Battilana, 2009). Marquis et al. (2007)

introduce a spatial dimension in their study of organisational legitimacy and social action to account for the effects of internal and external constituencies on organisational populations. Focusing on local corporations that engage in social action, they argue that geographic environments are especially important explanatory factors for understanding organisational activity and social action within geographical units. Local understandings, norms and rules serve as touchstones for legitimising social action and, by extension, organisational activity in a particular community. Geographical units potentially represent differences in their understanding of specific organisational activities, and this can have crucial effects on the extent to which the organisations can function in a specific spatial location.

Freeman and Audia (2006) come to a similar conclusion in their review of research that analyses organisations and the community context in which they reside. Discussing Ruef (2004), for example, they conclude that processes of legitimation and delegitimation of organisational forms can be of a local nature. Studying the demise of the plantation after the American Civil War, Ruef found that local perceptions of whether such an organisational form was socially accepted influenced its survival in the geographical unit where perceptions were present – in this case, northern counties in the state of Georgia. Freeman and Audia (2006) conclude that, consistent with the work of Marquis et al., socially accepted forms of collective action in an area accumulate through everyday interactions. The kinds of organisations people come into contact with in their daily lives influences their perceptions of them in important ways. This, in turn, affects the prospects of given organisational forms in the geographical area.

Marquis et al. (2007) also explain how this spatially formed process of organisational legitimation emerges and develops.

They build on institutional theories and the idea that cognitive templates about what constitutes appropriate organisational forms can change across geographical space and over time. Organisations in a particular geographical area are pressured to align their activities in ways that are seen as legitimate by the community living in the area. Using locally accepted models enhances the survival chances of organisations in that particular community. Organisational dynamics therefore cannot be understood outside the cultural and historical frameworks in which organisations are embedded, argue Marquis et al. They posit that local communities, which may be geographically bound, can have a deeper set of shared frameworks for legitimate organisational forms and behaviour. These cultural-cognitive frames, as they term them, provide templates to facilitate the adoption of similar practices by members of a community group. That, in turn, gives community actors a widely shared frame of reference, even though it can differ across localities. Such variation, at least in the US context, stems from a number of historical, demographical and geographical factors – for instance, the historical migratory and settlement patterns of different ethnic and religious groups, each of whom brings unique frames for what constitutes a legitimate organisational form.

Marquis and Battilana (2009: 286) regard the community ‘as a local level of analysis corresponding to the populations, organisations, and markets located in a geographic territory and sharing, as a result of their common location, elements of local culture, norms, identity, and laws’. They recognise that the boundaries of local communities are not intrinsic, but rather always partially constructed by researchers just as boundaries of organisational fields are constructed. Perceptions of whether an organisational form is a socially accepted form of collective action accumulate through everyday

interactions, as also argued by Freeman and Audia (2006). The idea that, through daily dealings with each other, people come to form collective ideas about appropriate forms of collective action is in keeping with Small (2002). His study on changing civic participation rates in a Latino housing project in Boston illustrates a case in which the relevant geographical unit for certain forms of organisations and collective action is the neighbourhood. Small shows how residents' perceptions are filtered through a set of cultural categories that highlight some aspects of the neighbourhood and ignore others. These perceptions become part of an often explicit narrative about the neighbourhood's role and significance in residents' lives. Residents' framing of the neighbourhood will, he argues, affect how they act in neighbourhood institutions. Certain frames will increase participation, while others will decrease it. Neighbourhood institutions will be influenced by these collective frames since they must conform to them to be considered appropriate and suitable forms of organisations.

New residents may bring their own – distinct from existent – narratives to the neighbourhood, which in time can alter the current collective frame in the neighbourhood. Changes in demographics can therefore have significant effects on how residents perceive their neighbourhood, its organisations and their own willingness to participate in them. This will then impact the spatial form of such organisations' legitimacy. Immigrants settling in a neighbourhood are an example of a demographic change that may result in a new segment of the population having different perceptions of civic participation, appropriate voluntary organisations and their own position in the neighbourhood (Vermeulen, 2006).

Whether or not the neighbourhood is a relevant geographical unit for the spatial dimension of legitimacy of a particular type

of organisation is most likely determined by its relationship with neighbourhood residents and the neighbourhood social structure (Vermeulen et al., 2014). Organisations with no, or only a weak, connection to neighbourhood life will be unaffected by residents' perceptions of their organisational form. On the other hand, organisations that play a major role in neighbourhood life can be strongly affected by the cultural-cognitive legitimacy frames. Studying Newark and Jersey City in the USA, Gibbons (2014) argues that racial and ethnic segregation in a city has a powerful contextual effect in shaping a community-based organisation's geographic attachment.

To understand the relationship between neighbourhoods and non-profit organisations, we must take into account a more general discussion on the effect that neighbourhoods have on the local organisations there. McQuarrie and Marwell (2009) argue that much recent research has shown how urban social organisation is increasingly driven by social, economic and political dynamics that extend far beyond the neighbourhood (see also Marwell, 2007). If organisations are the culmination of extra-local factors, then the relationship between organisations and the neighbourhood in which they are located is mostly unidirectional. This implies that local organisations influence the neighbourhood through their provision of activities and formation of neighbourhood networks, but that the neighbourhood itself and its residents have no significant influence on the organisations. Another possibility is that there is no relationship between the organisations and the neighbourhood whatsoever. McRoberts' (2005) study of black churches shows how religious organisations served as relatively self-contained places in which social cohesion was cultivated within specific affinity groups. According to McRoberts, the churches were in themselves communities,

which happened to be located within that neighbourhood mainly because of its affordable housing and easy access for people coming from outside. Capacities and contacts that the churches generated had little relevance for the neighbourhood. This is not to say that the neighbourhood's capacities and features had no relevance for the organisations, but rather that it was mainly infrastructural (provision of cheap adequate housing) as opposed to social.

In their study of immigrant community-based organisations in Amsterdam, Vermeulen et al. (2014) illustrate how the survival chances of an organisation are enhanced by certain characteristics that index the spatial dimension of organisational legitimacy, such as having interlocking directorates with other non-profits in the city and the ability to include various local constituencies on boards of directors. Community-based immigrant organisations in Amsterdam are, however, little influenced by the neighbourhood context – in concrete terms, the extent to which the neighbourhood is ethnically diverse and its socio-economic affluence. Vermeulen et al. interpret these findings to mean that the neighbourhood level may not always be a relevant environment from which to source institutional material for organisational activity or resources for community-based organisations. Furthermore, they speculate that the diversity of immigrant organisations may in fact eclipse important differences across organisational forms, such as non-profit service providers, recreational and leisure associations and cultural organisations that gear their activities to nearby residents, in contrast to citywide (or even broader) advocacy and support organisations whose locational decisions are independent from their mission or constituency (see also Small and McDermott, 2006). To see if the spatial dimension of organisational legitimacy has effects at the neighbourhood level, we now

turn to an organisational form known to have a strong relationship with the neighbourhood.

Voluntary leisure organisations and neighbourhoods

Voluntary leisure organisations usually encourage opportunities for people to enjoy their free time with others. How these organisations cater to the community varies greatly. The leisure organisations discussed in this paper can be broadly categorised according to their main activities: sports, cultural performance and hobbies. Examples of sports organisations would be football clubs and billiards associations. Drama clubs and children's circus groups would be found among what we classify as cultural performance organisations. Hobby organisations would include specific interest groups, such as computer labs for seniors and gardening associations.

Leisure organisations are empirically recognised as the most heterogeneous type of voluntary organisations. Their members comprise people from different backgrounds in terms of social-economics (e.g. income, education) and socio-cultural categories (e.g. religion, ethnicity) (McPherson, 1983; McPherson et al., 2001; Van der Meer and Van Ingen, 2009; Vermeulen et al., 2012). This heterogeneity also implies that such organisations may have a more difficult time gaining local legitimacy. Many leisure organisations have a strong neighbourhood focus (for the Dutch case, see Lelieveldt et al., 2009), offering residents activities, opportunities to meet one another and occasions for collective engagement. As such, we expect them to be more heavily dependent on the extent to which neighbourhood residents perceive them as appropriate and suitable organisational forms. In addition, we expect the level of organisational legitimacy for leisure organisations within neighbourhoods to

differ across the urban context, precisely because of the variation in neighbourhood characteristics thought to influence cultural-cognitive frames. More specifically, the constructed belief system in a neighbourhood is most likely influenced by demographic factors. Drawing on research that focuses on the individual characteristics of volunteers in leisure organisations, we identified three neighbourhood qualities that may influence spatial forms of organisational legitimacy for this organisational form: the neighbourhood's percentage of immigrants, percentage of youth and degree of residential mobility.

Differences in organisational legitimacy across geographical areas are, according to the literature discussing the spatial dimension, influenced by the presence of various immigrant groups, each with their own organisational traditions. We observe a similar tendency when it comes to the literature that analyses participation in voluntary leisure organisations. Immigrants bring with them certain ideas and notions of what constitutes legitimate leisure activities and the form and structure that such activities should take (Vermeulen, 2006; Vermeulen and Brünger, 2013). A large immigrant presence will thus impact existing norms and beliefs about leisure organisations and their activities in a given neighbourhood. For the Netherlands, immigrants from so-called non-Western countries are known to be significantly less active as members of leisure organisations than non-immigrants and immigrants from Western countries. Considering the three largest immigrant communities in Amsterdam – Turks, Surinamese and Moroccans – we see that in 2004–2005, between 1% and 4% of people from these groups in the Netherlands were members of leisure organisations, compared with 15% of people without an immigrant background (Dekker and De Hart, 2009). Informal organisations, often closely connected to family and strong social ethnic networks, are

perceived as more legitimate and suitable by many immigrants, especially in the first phase of their settlement process (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005; Vermeulen, 2006). We therefore expect the spatial dimension of legitimacy for leisure organisations to decrease when the percentage of non-Western immigrants in a neighbourhood increases; this would lead to a lower number of such organisations and a lower survival rate.

H1. A high percentage of immigrants in a neighbourhood decreases organisational density and the survival chances of leisure organisations located in that neighbourhood.

Another prominent element in the literature on voluntary organisations related to the issue of spatial legitimacy is the prevalence of youth. Scholars have found that their presence increases participation in voluntary associations, especially because children draw their parents into community life (Rotolo, 2000). Notably, as younger children enter elementary school, their parents are increasingly likely to join in organisational activities. Following from our theoretical approach, adults with children will not only be more interested in becoming and remaining a member of a voluntary organisation, but they will generally see it in a more positive light, as an appropriate and suitable organisational form. In the Dutch context, we find indeed that parents are more likely to be active members of voluntary leisure associations (Dekker and De Hart, 2009). From this we formulate an expectation that, the higher the percentage of youth in a neighbourhood, the higher the organisational legitimacy among its residents; this would lead to a higher number of such organisations and a higher survival rate.

H2. A high percentage of youth in a neighbourhood increases organisational density

and the survival chances of leisure organisations located in that neighbourhood.

Finally, we expect residential mobility to affect the organisational legitimacy of neighbourhood leisure organisations. Sampson (1991) argues that length of residence is the key factor, capable of swaying attitudes and behaviour to conform to that of the neighbourhood social community. Residential mobility operates as a barrier to the development of widespread local associational ties, according to Sampson. Some similar results have been found in Dutch research, such as Wittebrood and Van Dijk (2007), who show a negative correlation between residential mobility and social cohesion in city neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Such studies lead us to formulate our final hypothesis.

H3. High levels of residential mobility in a neighbourhood lead to lower organisational density and survival chances of leisure organisations located in that neighbourhood.

Our goal in the remainder of this paper is to explore the hypothesised effects of neighbourhood context on the ability of voluntary associations to maintain a vibrant local presence. We take neighbourhoods as our units of analysis and bracket the broader environment within which they are embedded. In doing so, we do not mean to suggest that extra-local conditions are unimportant. Rather, our intention is to establish a conceptual and methodological approach that can serve as a baseline for interrogating the interplay of spatial dimensions of legitimacy, resource flows and political constraints across multiple domains.

Data, measures and methods

For our research, we constructed a unique dataset that combines information on the activities of leisure organisations in

Amsterdam at three points in time, giving various details about the neighbourhoods in which they were officially located. The organisational-level data were collected for the years 2002, 2007 and 2012 from the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce, which allowed us to take stock of all registered foundations and associations (Vermeulen, 2006, 2013).

The starting point for our analysis was the 2002 database, which includes 17,540 non-profit organisations operating in Amsterdam (Tillie and Slijper, 2007). The database provides information on the year each organisation was founded, along with its name, address, mission statement and details about board members such as name and country and date of birth. Our units of analysis were neighbourhoods¹ in Amsterdam. The Netherlands' capital comprised 96 neighbourhoods in 2002, which differ vastly in terms of surface area and number of residents. In order to exclude industrial estates from the analysis,² we limited our selection to neighbourhoods with a minimum of 500 residents and 100 housing units. The selection produced a total of 79 neighbourhoods across the city – and within these neighbourhoods, 1671 leisure organisations – in the three aforementioned years. Information on the characteristics of these neighbourhoods was drawn from OIS, Amsterdam's research and statistics bureau.

Dependent variables

To assess whether the percentage of immigrants, the percentage of youth and the degree of residential mobility in the neighbourhood affect the spatial dimension of legitimacy for leisure organisations in that neighbourhood, we looked at (1) the presence of such organisations in different years and (2) at the survival chances of leisure organisations existing in 2002. Low levels of organisational legitimacy are related to a

lower number of leisure organisations (density) and higher rates of organisational disbanding. We operationalised the density of leisure organisations in a given Amsterdam neighbourhood as the number of leisure organisations per 1000 inhabitants (calculated separately for 2002, 2007 and 2012). We operationalised organisational disbanding as a dummy variable indicating whether a leisure organisation identified as active in 2002 was defunct in 2007 or in 2012.

Independent variables

The main independent variables were measured at the neighbourhood level. First, we operationalised the stock of immigrants as the proportion of non-Western immigrants in the neighbourhood. Both individuals who were born in a non-Western country or who had one or both parents born in a non-Western country were considered 'immigrant' in this study, as defined by CBS, the Dutch agency for statistics. Second, we operationalised the stock of youth as the proportion of people from zero to 19 years old in the neighbourhood. Third, we operationalised residential mobility as a sum score of all people who moved within a neighbourhood plus half the sum of movers out of and into a neighbourhood, divided by the total inhabitants of the neighbourhood (following Tolsma et al., 2009; Vervoort et al., 2011). We also included another measure for residential mobility in the analyses, namely the average residential duration of people in the neighbourhood.

In addition to these three explanatory variables, we controlled for two other known neighbourhood determinants of organisational density and survival (see Vermeulen et al., 2014). Added first to the analyses was a measure of affluence, average income. There is good reason to expect that the socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhood residents, such as compositional

effects related to levels of wealth, also play a role in the survival of leisure organisations. Affluent neighbourhoods stimulate organisational membership and volunteerism, whereas poverty drives both down (Letki, 2008; Tolsma et al., 2009). Second, we included a dummy variable for geographical location, namely whether or not a leisure organisation was located in the city centre. Amsterdam is unique in its organisational composition, as many organisations wish to be in the neighbourhoods comprising the city centre – something that could possibly influence the findings.

Besides relevant covariates at the neighbourhood level, we also controlled for a number of organisational-level characteristics that have been found to influence organisational survival and density (Vermeulen et al., 2014). These characteristics include: a linear and quadratic measure for organisational age; a dummy variable measuring whether the organisation was an association (as opposed to a foundation); a variable measuring the number of board members; a dummy variable measuring whether an organisation had any overlapping board membership with another organisation (an interlock); and a dummy variable measuring whether a leisure organisation was a sports organisation (as opposed to a cultural performance or hobby organisation). A note about organisational types, legal entities for furthering the public interest in civil law countries, such as the Netherlands, include both associations and foundations (Burger et al., 2001). A foundation is first and foremost characterised as having a type of legal personality without a necessary internal controlling body. The desires of the founder who attributed property to the foundation generally have great impact on how the organisation runs. By contrast, in an association, members' wishes are paramount (Kuperus, 2005; Van der Ploeg, 1999). This may imply that more people are involved in the operations of an

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	Mean/ proportion	SD	Min	Max
Dependent variables				
Density of leisure organisation	2.87	1.98	0.56	12.14
Disbanded or not?	0.24		0	1
Independent variables				
<i>Time level</i>				
Year			2007	2012
<i>Organisational level</i>				
Age	22.28	25.19	0	180
Age ² /100	11.31	27.68	0	324
# Board members	3.80	1.93	1	14
Interlock	0.44		0	1
Association	0.55		0	1
Sports organisation	0.48		0	1
<i>Neighbourhood level</i>				
% Non-Western immigrants	24.36	16.51	2.48	77.04
% Youth	18.68	6.74	5.85	34.63
Residential mobility	0.24	0.072	0.097	0.62
Average income	103.24	20.18	75.00	182.80
Organisational density	25.57	22.39	3.53	140.02
Average residential duration	8.16	1.82	3.6	14.6
City centre?	0.19		0	1
Number of leisure associations in neighbourhoods.				
	2002	2007		2012
Mean	20.29	21.12		21.09
Median	16	18		19
SD	14.50	14.61		13.71
Min	1	3		1
Max	67	70		65
Density of leisure associations in neighbourhoods.				
	2002	2007		2012
Mean	2.76	3.06		2.92
Median	2.14	2.28		2.34
SD	1.97	3.10		3.21
Min	0.35	0.29		0.54
Max	12.14	25.73		28.64

association than a foundation – the latter of whose board members are the only members (Vermeulen et al., 2012).

Table 1 provides a description of our organisational population. Almost half of Amsterdam's leisure organisations

concerned sports activities (48%); a little more than one-third cultural performance activities (34%); and the rest hobbies (18%). Leisure organisations were, on average, 22 years old, with a median age of 14. The oldest were sports organisations, being, on

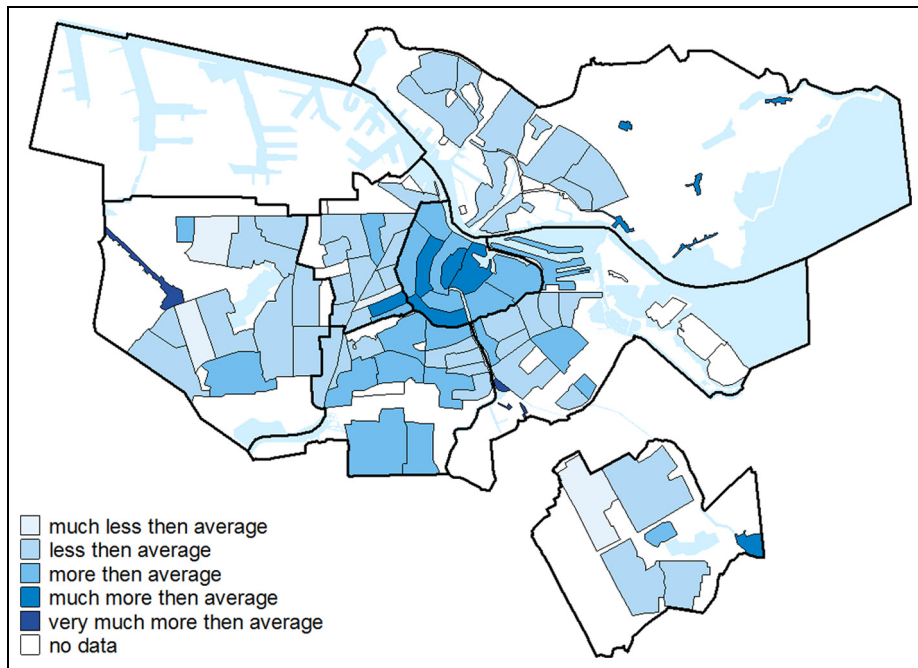


Figure 1. Average density of leisure organisations in 2002.

average, 26 years old. The youngest were cultural performance organisations, being, on average, 16 years old. These three types of organisations were rather similar in their numbers of board members. Leisure organisations in Amsterdam had, on average, three or four board members, and 44% of them had overlapping board membership with another organisation (both leisure and other types).

The average absolute number and the average density of leisure organisations in Amsterdam in 2012 increased when compared with 2002, but decreased when compared with 2007 (Table 1). Yet, the median absolute number and the median density of leisure organisations steadily increased from 2002 to 2012. Looking at the standard deviation as well as minimum and maximum numbers and density of leisure organisations, we see how neighbourhoods differed quite substantially in terms of what was

available to their residents. In 2002, there were neighbourhoods with less than one organisation per 1000 inhabitants in addition to neighbourhoods with more than 12 organisations per 1000 inhabitants. Figure 1 illustrates the differentiated distribution of leisure organisation across Amsterdam neighbourhoods in 2002.

Methods

For this study, we conducted two different analyses. The first estimated separate multivariate linear regressions at the neighbourhood level for the years 2002, 2007 and 2012. This analysis permitted us to ask basic questions about how neighbourhood factors – specifically, the prevalence of immigrants, young people and residential mobility – influence the density of leisure organisations in the neighbourhood, which we conceptualise as a measure of spatial legitimacy. The

second set of analyses employed multilevel modelling, allowing us to examine relevant neighbourhood effects while also controlling for determinants at the organisational level and including a growth curve at the time level, thus modelling the increase in mortality between 2007 and 2012. The dependent variable in the second analysis was organisational disbanding, that is, whether an organisation remained active or not between these periods. Accordingly, we modelled this process using multilevel logistic regression.

Results

Our first set of analyses focus specifically on the question of whether and, if so, how local characteristics of the neighbourhood, conceptualised as indicators of spatial legitimacy, influence the density of voluntary leisure organisations. Results of the multivariate linear regressions are presented in Table 2. The three neighbourhood characteristics account for the variance in the density of leisure organisations across Amsterdam neighbourhoods as follows: 50% for 2002, 41% for 2007 and 31% for 2012. The results also demonstrate, as expected by Hypothesis 1, that the percentage of non-Western immigrants in a neighbourhood is negatively correlated to the density of leisure organisations in that neighbourhood for each year. The higher the percentage of non-Western immigrants in a neighbourhood, the lower the legitimacy for such organisations in that area, which results in a low organisational density there. By looking at the standardised beta coefficients, we see that the association between the percentage of non-Western immigrants and density of leisure organisations is strongest in 2007.

Furthermore, the results illustrate that the presence of parents and their children in a neighbourhood – measured by percentage of youth – is positively related to the density of leisure organisations for all three years. This

Table 2. Density of leisure organisations in 2002.

	B	S.E.	Beta
Constant	2.46	2.70	–
% Non-Western immigrants	–0.08***	0.02	–0.77
% Youth	0.14***	0.04	0.48
Residential mobility	0.96	4.25	0.24
Average income	–0.003	0.02	0.22
Residential duration	–0.12	0.12	–0.09
City centre?	–0.67	0.78	0.10
N	79		
R ²	0.50		

Note: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test).

Density of leisure organisations in 2007.

	B	S.E.	Beta
Constant	–1.89	4.33	–
% Non-Western immigrants	–0.17***	0.04	–0.97
% Youth	0.34***	0.09	0.66
Residential mobility	13.33**	6.19	0.36
Average income	–0.05**	0.02	–0.30
Residential duration	0.45*	0.24	0.27
City centre?	2.10**	1.04	0.22
N	79		
R ²	0.41		

Note: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test).

Density of leisure organisations in 2012.

	B	S.E.	Beta
Constant	–3.06	5.34	–
% Non-Western immigrants	–12.6***	3.93	–0.70
% Youth	22.80***	7.49	0.51
Residential mobility	11.24	6.81	0.30
Average income	–0.03	0.02	–0.19
Residential duration	0.51	0.31	0.31
City centre?	1.47	1.14	0.15
N	79		
R ²	0.31		

Note: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test).

Table 3. Three-level logistic regression: Organisational disbandment.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	LogOdds	S.E.	LogOdds	S.E.	LogOdds	S.E.	LogOdds	S.E.
Fixed part								
Constant	-1.18***	0.11	-2.11***	0.14	-1.48***	0.25	-1.43***	0.26
<i>Level-1</i>								
Year			1.73***	0.12	1.80***	0.13	1.79***	0.13
<i>Level-2</i>								
Age					0.03*	0.02	0.03	0.02
Age ² /100					-0.03*	0.02	-0.03	0.02
# Board members					-0.26***	0.07	-0.26***	0.07
Interlock					-0.88***	0.25	-0.89***	0.25
Association					-0.30	0.27	-0.35	0.27
Sport organisation					-0.43*	0.25	-0.43*	0.25
<i>Level-3</i>								
% Non-Western immigrants							0.05***	0.02
% Youth							-0.06*	0.04
Residential mobility							-2.60	2.65
Average income							0.02**	0.01
Residential duration							0.10	0.09
City centre?							-0.12	0.37
Random part								
Level: Neighbourhoods								
Variance	0.15	0.14	0.17	0.18	0.15	0.18	0.00	0.00
Level: Organisations								
Variance	7.00	0.53	9.57	0.70	9.89	0.73	9.80	0.71
N (neighbourhoods)	79		79		79		79	
N (organisations)	1671		1671		1671		1671	
N (year)	3342		3342		3342		3342	

Notes: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test). Numbers are rounded off in this table. Continuous variables are grand-mean centred.

is in keeping with Hypothesis 2. We interpret this result as indicating that the higher the proportion of young people who reside in a neighbourhood, the more that formal leisure organisations are perceived as appropriate organisational forms, which results in an increase in such organisations there. By looking at the standardised beta coefficients, we see that the association between percentage of youth and the density of leisure organisations is also strongest in 2007.

The third explanatory variable, residential mobility, is only significantly related to the density of leisure organisations in 2007.

Surprisingly – and in contradiction to Hypothesis 3 – the effect of residential mobility on the density of leisure organisation is positive. This means that the higher the residential mobility, the higher that the density of leisure organisations is.

Table 3 present the results of the three-level logistic regression analysis and changes the unit of analysis from neighbourhoods to individual leisure organisations that existed in 2002. It shows the effects of various explanatory factors. On the one hand, we include organisational characteristics such as age and number of interlocks with other

non-profits in the city; on the other hand, we focus on three different characteristics of relevance at the neighbourhood level. For the purposes of this paper, we are especially interested in presence and strength of neighbourhood effects. On the basis of the variance component model, we can see that maximum variance in the propensity for leisure organisations to disband due to between-neighbourhood variation is 1.4% ($0.15/(0.15 + 7.00 + 3.29) = 0.014$).³ However, the maximum variance due to between-organisation variation is about 67% ($7.00/(0.15 + 7.00 + 3.29) = 0.67$). Differences in disbanding rates between organisations can therefore be mostly attributed to variations in organisational characteristics rather than in geographical locations – although the neighbourhood in which the leisure organisations were located does seem to matter to some extent.

The Wald statistic was used to test whether these between-neighbourhood and between-organisation variances were indeed non-zero. The test statistic for the between-neighbourhood variance was 1.181, compared with a chi-squared distribution on 1 degree of freedom (see Appendix). Bearing in mind that the critical value for a test at the 5% level is 3.84, we found no evidence that the between-neighbourhood variance was non-zero. Yet, this does not mean that there were no significant neighbourhood effects (Snijders and Bosker, 1999).¹

On the basis of the random intercept model including level-1, level-2 and level-3 variables, the hypotheses concerning the survival chances of leisure organisations could be tested, as illustrated in Table 3.⁴ We begin our discussion by looking first at the neighbourhood effects, followed by the individual organisational characteristics.

As expected by Hypothesis 1, the percentage of immigrants from a non-Western country was positively associated with the

disbanding of leisure organisations in a neighbourhood. The higher the percentage of non-Western immigrants in a neighbourhood, the lower the chances of survival were on average for individual leisure organisations. When non-Western immigrants increased by 1% in a neighbourhood, leisure organisations' odds of disbanding multiplied by 1.05 ($e^{0.05}$). A similar result was found when looking at the disbanding rate of leisure organisations between 2002 and 2007 and between 2002 and 2012 (see Appendix).

The presence of parents and children in a neighbourhood – in keeping with Hypothesis 2 – significantly decreased organisational disbanding rates of leisure organisations. The higher the percentage of youth in a neighbourhood, the higher the survival chances were on average for leisure organisations located in that neighbourhood. With every 1% increase of youth in a neighbourhood, leisure organisations' odds of disbanding became 0.94 times smaller. A similar result was found when looking at the disbanding rate of leisure organisations between 2002 and 2007 and between 2002 and 2012 (see Appendix).

Residential mobility was not significantly related to the disbanding of leisure organisations. We therefore found no support for Hypothesis 3 in this study. The same result emerged when we looked at the disbanding rate of leisure organisations between 2002 and 2007 and between 2002 and 2012 (see Appendix).

Table 3 further shows that the average income of a neighbourhood had a positive effect on the disbanding rates of leisure organisations in Amsterdam. The higher the average income of a neighbourhood, the lower the survival chances are of leisure organisations there. Although not a theoretical focus of this paper, the result seems counterintuitive. The existing literature posits that affluent neighbourhoods stimulate organisational membership and volunteerism,

whereas poverty drives both down (Letki, 2008; Tolsma et al., 2009).

The direction of the effects of all the organisational-level variables on the disbanding rates of leisure organisations are in line with previous theoretical and empirical studies. The most important of those effects are worth briefly mentioning. First, the results reported in Table 3 show that younger leisure organisations had significantly higher disbanding rates, which declined as they aged. Following the literature, we interpreted this finding as evidence for our claim that skills and routines furthering organisational legitimacy, and hence survival, take time to sink in. Second, leisure organisations with institutional linkages to other organisations in the city have significantly higher rates of survival. Establishing collaborative linkages to other non-profits is a crucial means for organisations to achieve reliability and accountability – and thus increase their survival prospects (Baum and Oliver, 1991; Galaskiewicz et al., 2006; Vermeulen et al., 2014; Wollebaek, 2009). Third, organisations that can represent a diverse constituency – for instance, in terms of ethnicity, class, gender or ideology – gain legitimacy, which promises to increase their survival rates. Organisations with a higher number of board members are more likely to represent a diverse constituency, and are therefore expected to have higher survival chances (Vermeulen et al., 2014). Table 3 shows that the number of board members does indeed have a positive effect on the survival rates of leisure organisations. Finally, we see that sports organisations have a significantly higher survival rate than cultural performance or hobby organisations. We would venture to guess that sports-centred leisure associations, many of them football associations, are, on average, larger and more professionally run than the other two organisational types, thereby increasing their survival chances significantly.

Conclusions

Voluntary organisations are spatially located in a city and resources are unevenly geographically distributed in the urban context. *Where* these organisations are located therefore impacts their ability to operate effectively over time. Locations harbour both constraints and opportunities for organisations to access resources, power and social structures. One of the primary resources for organisations is legitimacy (Stinchcombe, 1965), defined as the general acceptance that an organisation's actions are desirable, suitable and appropriate (Suchman, 1995). Following the work of Marquis et al. (2007) and Marquis and Battilana (2009), we argued in this paper that organisational legitimacy has a spatial dimension as well. Local understandings, norms and rules can serve as touchstones for organisational activity in a particular community. Geographical units differ in their understanding of specific organisational activities, which can have important effects on the extent to which these organisations can function in that specific geographical unit. For organisations that have a strong relationship with the neighbourhood in which they reside, the neighbourhood can be the relevant geographical unit and therefore should be included in the analysis of voluntary organisations in urban contexts.

Leisure organisations are known to have relatively strong focus on, and relationships with, the neighbourhoods in which they are embedded. Empirically recognised as the most heterogeneous type of voluntary organisations, they encompass members from various social-economic and social-cultural backgrounds – which means that they must secure legitimacy from multiple social groups. Activities are often geared towards neighbourhood residents, and heterogeneous social neighbourhood networks are formed within these organisations. It is, however,

not just the proximity of potential members that makes the neighbourhood a relevant geographical unit for leisure organisations. A Dutch study shows that only 20% of members of a leisure organisation come from the neighbourhood in which the organisation is located (Lelieveldt et al., 2009). What matters much more, as argued in this paper, are the frames and perceptions of neighbourhood residents, including those who are not organisational members. Neighbourhoods' deeper set of shared frameworks regarding legitimate organisational forms and behaviour can accumulate through everyday interactions with other neighbourhood residents. These cultural-cognitive frames provide community actors with a widely shared understanding of what constitutes a legitimate organisational form, and this frame can differ across locality. Small (2002), for instance, found how residents' framing of their neighbourhood in Boston affected civic participation in neighbourhood institutions.

Groups and individual residents may bring their own, sometimes differing, frames to the neighbourhood. If the number of residents with such divergent frames grows high enough, it can challenge those that already exist and ultimately change the collective frame of neighbourhood residents. We thus see how the demographics of the neighbourhood can have an important influence on the spatial dimension of organisational legitimacy for voluntary organisations there. Building on existing literature on volunteers in leisure organisations, we identified three possible relevant neighbourhood features: percentage of immigrants, percentage of youth and degree of residential mobility. We expected that formal leisure organisations would be perceived as a less appropriate organisational form by many immigrants coming from non-Western countries and as a more appropriate organisational form by parents who live in the neighbourhood. The

analyses conducted for this paper illustrated that the higher the percentage of non-Western immigrants in a neighbourhood, the lower the density of leisure organisations there. Percentage of youth in the neighbourhood had the opposite effect. In addition, leisure organisations are less likely to survive in neighbourhoods with a high percentage of immigrants, while being more likely to self-sustain in neighbourhoods with a high percentage of children. We interpreted these findings as evidence that both the demographic characteristics of a neighbourhood and the everyday interactions of neighbourhood residents with local organisations can influence the spatial dimension of organisational legitimacy. Residential mobility had no significant negative effects on the density or survival of leisure organisations.

Additional research in other urban contexts is necessary to determine whether our results are generalisable beyond the Amsterdam neighbourhoods that were the units of analysis. It is also an open question whether the patterns we have identified are more or less relevant for other voluntary organisational forms that may be less localised with respect to their membership base or the provision of services and activities (as found in earlier research regarding immigrant organisations; see Vermeulen and Brünger, 2013; Vermeulen et al., 2014). That said, the strong effects of two different neighbourhood characteristics on the density of leisure organisations – taking the neighbourhood as unit of analysis – and the survival rates of individual leisure organisations – taking the organisations as unit of analysis – convince us that the spatial dimension of organisational legitimacy is not just relevant, but also strong for this particular organisational form. Further research is needed to pinpoint why and how these voluntary leisure organisations are affected by the collective frames of neighbourhood residents in

contrast to other neighbourhood-based organisations. Nonetheless, our analyses show that we need to take the spatial dimensions of organisational processes more seriously. Here we have focused on the more proximate, neighbourhood level to demonstrate that spatial legitimacy matters for the ability of voluntary associations to gain cultural-cognitive traction among diverse group of residents in ways that promote their survival and, by extension, the vibrancy of associational life at the local level. Our more ambitious objective is to encourage other scholars of urban associational life to pay attention specifically to organisational and urban processes, whether the relevant geographical unit be at the international, national, regional, urban or neighbourhood level.

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Notes

1. The national Dutch statistical agency (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS) terms these 96 areas *buurten* ('neighbourhoods'). Amsterdam's research and statistics bureau (Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek, OIS) uses the term '*buurtcombinaties*' ('neighbourhood combinations') for the same geographical unit. We use 'neighbourhoods' to indicate the 96 geographical units.
2. Industrial estates are often home to relatively high numbers of foundations, which, in combination with low numbers of residents, leads to exceptionally high numbers of organisations per 1000 residents.
3. The variance on level 1 is in multilevel logistic models fixed at $\Pi^2/3 = 3.29$.
4. To control for neighbourhood size, the model was also estimated with an inclusion of the number of inhabitants in the neighbourhoods. Since the results were the same, the model is presented without this variable.

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APPENDIX

Appendix. Results using MLWin: Two-level logistic regression 2012.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	LogOdds	SE	LogOdds	SE	LogOdds	SE
Fixed part						
Constant	-1.13	0.06	-0.72	0.12	0.04	0.11
<i>Level-1</i>						
Age			0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
Age ² /100			-0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.01
# Board members			-0.18	0.04	-0.13	0.03
Interlock			-0.56	0.13	-0.46	0.11
Association			-0.20	0.14	-0.17	0.12
Sports organisation			-0.25	0.12	-0.23	0.11
<i>Level-2</i>						
% Non-Western immigrants					0.03	0.01
% Youth					-0.03	0.02
Residential mobility					-0.95	1.17
Average income					0.01	0.00
Residential duration					0.08	0.04
City centre?					-0.02	0.17
Random part						
Level: Neighbourhoods						
Variance	0.016	0.038	0.014	0.039	0	0
N (neighbourhoods)	79		79		79	
N (organisations)	1671		1671		1671	

Notes: Bold = $p < 0.05$ for a one-tailed t-test. Numbers are rounded off in this table. Continuous variables are grand-mean centred.

Results using MLWin: Two-level logistic regression 2007.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	LogOdds	SE	LogOdds	SE	LogOdds	SE
Fixed part						
Constant	-0.36	0.06	0.02	0.11	-0.68	0.12
<i>Level-1</i>						
Age			0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
Age ² /100			-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01
# Board members			-0.13	0.03	-0.18	0.04
Interlock			-0.46	0.11	-0.56	0.13
Association			-0.14	0.12	-0.22	0.14
Sports organisation			-0.23	0.11	-0.26	0.13
<i>Level-2</i>						
% Non-Western immigrants					0.03	0.01
% Youth					-0.04	0.02
Residential mobility					-1.69	1.36
Average income					0.01	0.00
Residential duration					0.03	0.04
City centre?					-0.16	0.19
Random part						
Level: Neighbourhoods	0.088	0.045	0.074	0.043	0	0
Variance						
N (neighbourhoods)	79		79		79	
N (organisations)	1671		1671		1671	

Notes: Bold = $p < 0.05$ for a one-tailed t -test. Numbers are rounded off in this table. Continuous variables are grand-mean centred.